MEARN SONGS AND OMBER VERSE

Williard Douglas Corby



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WILLARD DOUGLAS COXEY

HEART SONGS

AND

OTHER VERSE

BY

WILLARD DOUGLAS COXEY

MAYWOOD, ILL.
CHAS. T. GALLOP & CO.
1906



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THOSE WHOSE FAITH
IN THE
MAKER OF THESE RHYMES
HAS NEVER WAVERED

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HEART SONGS



The River and the Sea

Straight and strong, as he darted along,
Was the River, bold and free;
And the gamboling light on his bosom bright
Was a thing that was fair to see—
As brave as a sight could be.

"Stay but a little,"
The flowerets said;
"We'll make thee a garland
Of roses red.
We'll build on the strand
A palace so grand,
And crown thee king of the Flowery Land!"

But the River said "Nay," as he hurried away-His heart belonged to the Sea;
"Nor Sorcery's wile nor Witchery's smile
Can hold me back," said he-"I go to my love, the Sea!"

"Stay but a little,"
The Zephyr said,
Resting her hands
On his wavy head;
"Such love as mine
Can never be thine
When with the Ocean thou shalt combine."

"Thy smile is sweet, but it were not meet
That I should abide with thee;
So speed the tide, that I may glide
To the home of my love, the Sea—
To the bride who is waiting for me!"

"Stay but a little,"
The Oriole said—
And sweet was the voice
With which she plead—
"In woodland tree
I'll sing for thee
If thou wilt only dwell with me!"

"Fain would I stay, but I must away—
I hear the voice of the Sea;
And soft and low is the rhythmic flow,
And sweet is her song to me—
The song of my love, the Sea!"

"Stay but a little,"
The Wood Nymph said,
"And let me be
Thy bride instead.
Here on my breast,
With love caresst,
Thy troubled heart will be at rest.

"No rest is mine, no peace divine
Until I wed the Sea.
Oh, can't you hear the music clear
That swells so far and free—
That sweetly welcomes me?"

And still the River,
Unbound and free,
Rolls and ripples
Toward the SeaAn amber bow
To tint and glow
The waters blue that ebb and flow.

"My Queen of Fates that yearning waits,

'Tis I, thy lover free;

The Zephyrs smile, and the Nymphs beguile,
But my heart is true to thee—

For life and all eternity!

"With trusting faith—
My hand in thine—
We'll reign together,
Queen of mine!
My love for thee
Shall sweeter be
Than ever love on land or sea."

Soft and low, like the gentle flow
Of the brook in the quiet lea,
A voice replied, "Thy love and bride
Alas! I can never be—
For all is the love of the Sea!"

"Ah, queen of mine,
Whose love I own,
I live, I breathe,
For thee alone!

Thy heart with me Shall still be free To love whoever loves the Sea!"

But the radiant Sea is deaf to the plea Of the River God so fair, And into the tide, so vast and wide, He dashes in wild despair— The grave of his love is there.

A River lost
In the mighty deep—
Another pearl
For the Sea to keep;
A rivulet cast
In the Ocean vast—
A restless heart at peace at last.

We Two

What was the world made for, Sweet—
Why was it made?
For just you and me,
That I should love thee,
With a love that shall last through eternity.

What were hearts made for, Sweet—
For what were hearts made?
To feel the elation
Of love's sweet sensation
In every throb of the blood's warm pulsation.

What were lips made for, Sweet—
For what were lips made?
To whisper of bliss,
And respond with a kiss;
Could heaven give anything sweeter than this?

Moods

When My Lady smiles
Earth has a brighter hue,
And flowers fair,
Redolent with dew,
Perfume the air—
When My Lady smiles,

When My Lady frowns,
The air is chill—
The roses blight—
The world stands still,
And all is night—
When My Lady frowns.

When My Lady smiles
There is no night,
Nor gloom, nor rain,
And roses bright
All bloom again—
When My Lady smiles

You

I have tried to think, sometimes, my Love,
What the world would be without you—
If, never again, in the passing years,
I could fold my arms about you.

For who could soothe like you, my Love,
When my heart, like a troubled ocean,
Would dash itself on the rocks of care
Were it not for your devotion?

And who would condone my faults, my Love?
They are many and great I fear—
But the sweetest woman in all the world,
And that is you, my dear.

Love's Secret

A Butterfly said to a fluttering Moth,

"Oh, what is the secret of love?"

The Moth answered low, "I really don't know—
Go ask of our neighbor, the Dove,"

So the Butterfly hurried away to the Bird,
And repeated her question there;

And the Dove made reply, with a tremulous sigh,

"Go ask of the Maiden fair—
Go ask of the Maiden fair!"

The Butterfly found, in a garden, the Maid,
And, perched on her dainty white glove,
She murmured, in accents as light as the air,
"Won't you tell me the secret of love?"
On the cheeks of the Maid came a delicate blush,
As pink as the breast of the Dove—
"When your lips feel the bliss of a true lover's kiss
You will know the secret of love—
You will know the secret of love!"

A Prairie Rose

My Love is sweet as the prairie rose
That smiles in the morning sun!
(Oh, never a sweeter flower was blown
Since woman by love was won;
And never a ruddier flame was seen,
In the land that is green and fair,
Than the crimson blush of the wild red rose
That scenteth the prairie air).

The flowers droop when the day is dark,
And oft, when the wild winds blow,
The petals scatter so far and wide
None listeth whither they go;
But sweet and complete was the rose I plucked—
So like my Love—so fair—
That I hid it away with my treasure trove
And I'll cherish it everywhere.

Love, the Chameleon

Love suffereth long, and is kind; Love hath a thousand eyes—and is blind.

Love is perverse as a wayward child; Yet Love is tender, and sweet, and mild.

Love is idle, and Love is gay; Yet Love is busy the livelong day.

Love is cruel when Love would sue; Yet Love is gentle, and kind, and true.

Love is a mirror for passion's glare; Where Love reflects all things are fair.

Love is the key to Pandora's box; Love is the world's great paradox. A Love Idyl

"Sad has my life been—
Ills e'er betide me—
Yet my soul ever
Lingers beside thee.

"Do not disdain me—
Coquettries stifle—
Hearts may be broken—
Love is no trifle,

"To thy dear self," he cried,
"All my soul ever
Clings with a tie of love
Nothing can sever.

"Speak but the little words—
Rue it you'll never—
"Love I thee well
Forever and ever.'"

Over her face the blood
Swept like a river:
"I love thee," she said—
"And I'll love thee forever."

The Sleep Eternal

The night is dark, the way is drear—
Awake, my Love, awake!
My boding heart is faint with fear;
How canst thou sleep when I am near?
Awake, my Love, awake!

Thou wilt not speak—thy voice is still— Awake, my Love, awake! Against my breast I'll hold thee till I feel thy heart's responsive thrill; Awake, my Love, awake!

The roses from thy cheeks have fled— Awake, my Love, awake! Thy silence fills my soul with dread; It is the slumber of the dead— Awake, my Love, awake!

I know it is the sleep of death—
Awake, my Love, awake!
And yet, with every sobbing breath,
My breaking heart, appealing, saith,
Awake, my Love, awake!

Love

I love her. Why?
What matters why?
Enough it is I love her
With a love that cannot die.

I love her, Sweet?
No words can tell how sweet.
Love's light is in her eyes—
Love guards her feet.

I love her. Fair?
In my fond eyes
All beauty crowns
Her form and face and hair.

I love her. Content?
My heart sings free
Because I love her
And my Love loves me.

Sometime

Sometime, dear heart—I know not when—
And yet I pray it may be soon—
We two shall walk together, hand-in-hand,
And all the earth be fair as noon,

And where I go shalt thou go, too,
In comradeship complete, divine—
Thy land shall be my native place,
And all my people shall be thine.

Dear love of mine, it is not well
That you and I should live apart—
In joy or sorrow, weal or woe,
Let's stand together, heart to heart!

Parted

Dear Love! I call you so, and yet
I may not hold you to my heart, nor say
The words that, burning in my soul,
Would light you on your lonely way.

Dear Heart! you think me cold, and yet
My thought is with you day by day;
I love you dearly, tho' I know
Our paths must lie apart alway.

After the Storm

Why should we grieve when the day is dark?
Why should we fret at the rain?
After the moisture has kissed the earth
The flowers will bloom again.

Why should we grieve if those we love Are estranged for a little while? The sweetest favors the lips can know Are the kisses that reconcile. The Poet

A poet said to his heart, one day,
"Oh, heart of mine, be still.
The love of woman is but a snare—
A poet's love is a thing of air
That defies his heart and will."

A poet said to his soul one day,
"Oh, soul of mine, be still.

A poet's realms are the mountain peaks—
His love is the gentle voice that speaks
To his soul from wood and rill."

Goin' Home to Bill

All day ah've b'en a-frettin'—
A-frettin' fo' yo', Bill;
Ah wants t' see yo', honey,
An' mah heart et won' kee' still;
Ah longs t' feel th' presshah
Ov yo' han' within mah own,
Fo' ah'm tiah'd, mahty tiah'd
Ov tray'lin' all alone!

They ain't no kin' o' music
Thet 'ud maik mah heart rejoice
Laike th' echa ov yo' footsteps
An' th' ripple o' yo' voice.
Ah sees yo' ev'y minnit,
Laike a picchah in a frame,
An' ah loves t' watch yo' feachahs
As ah loves t' call yo' name.

Th' days ah jes' a-flyin'—
Th' houahs mahty feow,
Tell ah'll be speedin' homewa'd
On mah way t' yo'.
Got no use fo' travelin'—
Other folks ken roam—
Ah'm a-comin'—comin' back, Bill,
T' yo'—an' love—an' home!

My Best Girl

Lots of women, loads of fun, Ever since the world begun, But for me there's only one— My Best Girl.

She's the kind that gladness brings, And to whom a fellow clings— She's an angel without wings Is my Best Girl.

When the days are dark and long, And everything is going wrong, Then she's cheerful, bright and strong— Is my Best Girl.

If a fellow's down and out—
Don't know how to turn about—
'Tis then she puts the blues to rout—
Does my Best Girl.

When my head is racked with pain, Her touch, as gentle as the rain, Brings peace and comfort back again— My Best Girl.

She's a temper, just the same, And it bursts at times in flame; But she's not alone to blame, Is my Best Girl. When I'm maddest that's when she Is just as sweet as sweet can be—
Takes all the mad right out of me,
Does my Best Girl,

God bless you, dear, where'er you are; My heart is with you near and far; You are my pal and guiding star--My Best Girl, Parting and Meeting

Sweet is the parting kiss of love,

And sweet the kiss of love's fond greeting—
But weary are the days that lie between

The parting and the hour of meeting.



STORIES IN RHYME



The Discontented Magian And His Five Gifted Sons

Once upon a time, in some far Eastern land, A magian, learned in books, and passing skilled of hand,

Was blessed of Heaven, inasmuch as he Could boast five sons for his posterity. Each one some talent had, which fickle Fate denied

The father and the other sons beside.

One was a hunter, lucky, staunch and bold;

Another had the knack of changing dross to gold;

gold;

\$\frac{3}{3}\$

The third, a leader born, held men enslaved By deeds as bold as ever hero braved; The fourth all knowledge sought, nor yet in vain Had wooed the Muse in sweet, poetic strain; The last was made to love, and well he played his part,

For maidens everywhere besieged his tender heart.

The magian oft declared his children heaven sent,

And yet because of them was discontent:
"Twas hard to understand," he'd oft declare,
"How Nature with her gifts could be so spare,
When every one in all the worthy lot
Might all the talents have as well as not."

Much brooding in one never-ending strain, In time reacted on the magian's brain,

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Until one day, within a fateful hour, The genii tempted him to use his magic power. Saying, "What matters it tho' four be dead, If he who lives has all their gifts instead?"

And so by virtue of the gift he had,
Which magi use for purposes both good and
bad,

He changed the five all into one,
And found himself the father of an only son.
In vain, however, did he try to trace
The marks of genius on his offspring's face;
In vain the hunter sought—the bowman bold;
In vain the trader, with his touch of gold;
The leader brave no longer led the van,
But was a slave to every other man;
The poet's wings were trailing in the mire,
Bereft of metre and the sacred fire;
And even Love, by some strange fate,
Had changed his wooing into words of hate.

The magian, on the ground, in wild despair,
Fell sprawling, tearing at his hair,
The while he cursed his craven son,
And swore his evil work should be undone.
Forgetting in his wrathful hour,
A single change exhausts the magian's power;
Until, remorseful, penitent, with throbbing brain,

He calls on Allah to restore his sons again, And praises Heaven, as his eyes behold The five, with each his talent as of old. The moral's old as anything that e'er was writ: Whate'er your talent is, 'twas made to fit, And magian never yet evolved a plan That beat Dame Nature in the making of a man.

His Last Stand

'Twas the closing night of the circus year—
The program was nearly spent—
And the "actors" were saying their last "goodbyes,"

Back in the dressing tent.

Much of sorrow the year had brought,
But plenty of friendships true,
And glad as were they to be getting away,
They dreaded the parting, too.

Apart, on his trunk, sat the "King of the Air"—
But a "ruler" no more was he;
The aerial flights he had taken that night
Were the last they would ever see.
On his pallid face was a hectic flush,
And his cough—it was sad to hear;
The doctors said if he didn't go West
He would die ere the end of the year.

'Twas the "night of his life" on the swinging trapeze—

He had never "caught on" so well— And the thundering cheers still rang in his ears Like the roar of an ocean swell;

But now he sat with his face in his hands—A picture of mute despair;

And down, through his fingers, trickled the tears. As he wept in his misery there.

Softly the "actors" gathered around
And one of them spoke for all;
"Old chap, don't fret, you're a good one yet,
Tho' you've had a mighty close call!
All you need is the sun and the air,
And a winter of quiet and rest,
And you'll be as strong as the season is long
When you're home again from the West.

"Every one in the dressing tent
Is anxious to give you a lift,
And so we've gathered a 'bit of a purse'—
You may call it a Christmas gift.
You'll need it, old pal, when you get to Tucson,
Out on the desert drear—
And'so, good-bye, 'til you're safe and well,
Back with the show next year."

He tried to tell them how good they were;
But the horror—it wouldn't down—
And all he could see were the lonely hours
Of his life in the "lunger's" town;—
Far away from the ones he loved,
In a battle for life and breath,
With the only reward the endless sleep
That comes with the chill of death,

Out from the "big top" came the strains Of the song of songs divine— "Home, Sweet home!" how it tingled thro' His bloodless veins like wine! He tried to smile, tho' all the while
His heart was breaking in twain,
For he knew (for him) that grand old song
Would never be played again.

One by one he clasped their hands
In a quivering, last farewell;
Then, trembling, slow, he started to go,
But faltered—staggered—and fell.
As gently as women they raised him up
And tenderly pillowed his head,
But the "King of the Air" had "closed" for life,
And "signed" with the host of the dead,

L'Aiglon

Written after seeing Miss Maud Adams in Rostand's Masterpiece.

On eagle wings my thoughts have soared—
None ever dreamed as I;
And now, before my work is done,
The end is nigh.

I never more shall see thee, France—
My royal mother free;
And yet I thought I heard thee call,
And becken on to me.

I dreamed there waved above my head
The gleaming fleur-de-lis;
I dreamed the eagles led me on
To power and victory.

On land and sea the battle raged,
With horse, and foot, and fleet;
Till, everywhere, a conquered world
Lay prostrate at my feet.

I saw the guards, in line, salute
An Emperor passing by;
I heard the people shout, and thought
That Emperor was I.

And then I dreamed another dream: I stood on Wagram's field, And heard the voices of the dead Where once the cannon pealed;—

The awful cry of wounded men
The ghostly breezes bore—
The protest of a dying host
Against the lust of war.

The dreams are past—the visions fled—
The sand is almost run;
But still with fleeting breath I cry:
"Napoleon! Napoleon!"

A Confederate Episode

There was joy in the heart of farmer Brent, Tho' his eyes were dim and his figure bent, For Hood was marching, day and night, To put the troops of the North to flight— Up from the banks of the Tennessee, With horse, and foot, and artillery.

But it wasn't of Hood alone he thought— Of Hood and the battles yet unfought— But the boys he had sent away to the war, Who were coming back with brigade and corps, To fight for the South, and for Hood and Lee, In their native valleys of Tennessee.

The mother had died while the boys were young,

When the hearts of the people were yet unwrung By the news of battle—the bitter strife
Of a struggle that threatened the nation's life;
But the farmer was father and mother in one,
And he loved them each as an only son;
And, strange to say, as the years rolled by,
And the whitening hair and vacant eye
Told that the days were nearly spent
In the quiet life of farmer Brent,
The love he had given his boys of old
Came back with interest a hundredfold,
And it never occurred to Joe and Ned
To grieve the heart and bow the head

Of the patient father, whose gentle ways Had smoothed the troubles of childhood days.

When the war broke out, and the message came That North and South were all aflame, And the guns that told of Sumter's fall Made the Southern cause the cause of all, The youth and brawn of Tennessee, The merchants' sons and the yeomanry, Went off to the front, with courage high, To strive for glory—perhaps to die; And, whenever a company marched away, With waving colors and trumpet bray, The Brent boys looked with sinking heart—They wanted to go, but they couldn't depart, And leave for their father's aged hands The care of stock and harvest lands.

And so they stayed, but the news that came Back from the front, where the "rebel" name Was filling the North with fear and dread, And vict'ry perched where Southron led, Touched their pride, and a blush of shame More than once on their faces came When the old folks looked their way, and said, With quavering voice and nodding head, That "feeding cattle and raising corn Was women's work, when the land was torn By the storm of battle, and, day by day. The ranks were thinning, and thousands lay Dead in the trenches, and General Lee Was calling the youth and the chivalry

Of all fair Dixie, near and far, To hurry on to the seat of war!"

But, while they suffered and said no word, The soul of the father was being stirred By the news of battle, and his brave old heart Was sorely troubled, for he couldn't take part; And then he looked at Ned and Joe, And cried: "I'll do it—I'll let them go. For they are young, and their limbs are free, And they'll fight for the South as well as me!"

So the Brent boys gallantly marched away, With waving colors and trumpet bray, And the old man thought, "If either one Should fall in battle, God's will be done," But every letter that found its way To farmer Brent was sure to say That both the boys were sound and well, With never a scratch from shot or shell; And the tales they told of bravery done By Franklin boys, in battles won, Was a source of pride, for well he knew Where others went his boys went too. And yet, in spite of his heart and will, 'T was wearisome waiting at home until The noise of battle, the leaden rain. Should cease, and his boys come back again.

But now he went about the place With peace in his heart and hope in his face; And, whenever he passed the time of day With friend or neighbor, he'd stop and say, "What's the news of the boys in gray,
And what's the chance of 'em coming this way?"
And when they replied, as he knew they would,
"They were coming that way, 't was understood,"
He'd rub his hands and say with a smile,
"Then I'll see my boys in a little while!"

Away to the South where the boys in gray Pressed eagerly forward, night and day, Burning to match their might and skill With the Federal troops at fair Nashville, There was many a soldier lad who'd boast To his bold companions up from the coast, "This is my State, boys—keep your eyes on me, And see how we fight in old Tennessee!" But there wasn't a soldier in all the crowd Who looked so brave, or who felt so proud As the Brent boys did on that fatal day When the news came back that the Federals lay Entrenched in force, on hill and down, To bar the way to Franklin town.

In the early morn, when the boys awoke, They could see the spires and curling smoke Of the pretty town, and nearer still could plainly trace

The gabled roof of their native place:
And the sight of the homestead nestling there,
With the hills about it, green and fair,
Touched their hearts with a sudden thrill,
Like the echo of music when the night is still—

A feeling of pleasure, and yet of dread For the dear old place and its honored head.

But scant was the time for hope or fear,
With the sun awake and the "Yankees" near;
And loud and shrill came the trumpet call—
"Forward, forward, one and all!"
Like the roar from the depths of a muffled mine,
A shout went up from the "rebel" line,
And like a torrent, wild and free,
The troops swept on toward the enemy.

In the Federal ranks, beyond the trees, Where the stars and stripes waved in the breeze, The soldiers stood, with bated breath, In silence, and as grim as death; While ever onward came the swell, And higher rose the "rebel" yell.

But see! a sudden tremor seems to thrill
The Federal ranks along the hill—
A single shot— a ringing shout—
And then the fires of hell break out!
Under the storm of leaden rain
The Southrons pause, then charge again,
Until, within the jaws of death,
They feel the cannons' heated breath,
And then, and not 'til then, give way,
And Federal bullets win the day.

And now, where but an hour ago, The waving grass was wont to grow, The field has turned from green to red, Where lie the dying and the dead; While, far away, the victors' shout Proclaims defeat and Southron rout.

In the angle of an orchard wall,
Among the first that day to fall,
Torn and mangled in the fray,
Side by side the Brent boys lay.
With clasping hands, in sight of home,
They waited for the end to come;
And then a wish, a burning thought,
Within their hearts expression sought—
If in that hour of awful pain,
They could but see the place again—
Could find their father, waiting nigh,
And say a loving last good-bye!

Out from the bloody angle red
They pick their way among the dead,
Step by step, with reeling brain,
Fainting now, then up again,
'Til, stumbling on, they reach the bridge
And mount the old, familiar ridge.

With gaping wounds and gasping breath, And eyes that have the glaze of death, They stagger up, and looking 'round Survey the well-remembered ground—The apple grove, the pebbled stream, The scene of many a boyhood dream;

The ivied-mill, where many an hour
They watched the slowly-grinding flour;
The "quarters" where in lazy ease
The negroes sang their melodies;
But where's the homestead, quaint and still?
And where's the barn beneath the hill?
Unroofed, with battered walls, and torn,
The dear old house where they were born,
And where the cattle once were fed
Is naught but wreck and embers red;
While e'en the fence, where years ago
The old red gate swung to and fro,
Splintered by shell, and rent by ball,
Totters in ruins, ripe to fall.

One look at the place so desolate, A sob for the loving father's fate, And then, "Farewell, old home!" they cried, And, falling prostrate, gasped and died.

At even, as the sun went down
Behind the spires of Franklin town,
An aged farmer made his way
Among the dead who fell that day—
Bowed with grief, and dreading lest
He'd find his boys among the rest—
And climbing up the orchard hill
He found them lying, cold and still,
With rigid limbs, but wistful face,
Turned toward their native place.

The Gleaner

Across the fields the gleaner comes—
A daughter of the soil;
Upon her rugged face is stamped
The lineage of toil.

No gentle birth gleams in her eyes;
No pride of race is there;
And yet she smiles to feel the breath
Of summer in the air.

With lips distended wide she drinks
The glory of the morn,
And breathes the scent of new-mown hay
Across the meadows borne.

She feels the peace of early dawn,
The joy of life—and, hark!
Above the drowsy fields she hears
The music of the lark!

And now the lowing of the kine
Is heard upon the lea,
Where scented flowers wake to greet
The droning of the bee.

And still the gleaner smiles to hear
The voices of the morn,
That speak alike to rich and poor,
And to the lowly born.

What cares she for the centuries—
The crushing weight of years?
Within that rugged form a soul
The song of nature hears.

Her hands are rough, her feet are bare, Her strength is sorely tried; And yet content illumes her face And makes it glorified! The Blue and the Gray

Through the streets of a Southern city
A funeral cortege went:
They were taking a gallant soldier boy
To sleep in his marble tent;
A youth as fair as his own fair land—
A hero, with heart of gold—
And many an eye was dim with tears
As the tale of his death was told.

For he was the son of a soldier,

Who stood at the cannon's mouth

And fought for the cause he thought was right—

The cause of the Sunny South—

But who lived to honor the dear old flag,

With its stars so dearly bought,

Andito offer his only boy to die

andito offer his only boy to die
For the flag that his father fought,

When the President called for volunteers

To fight in a foreign land,

And the slumbering sparks of a nation's wrath

To a mighty flame was fanned,

He was one of the first to be enrolled

To fight for Cuba free,

And he gave his life as a sacrifice

l he gave his life as a sacrifice For human liberty. Into the storm of shot and shell,
In the battle of San Juan Height,
He bore the flag that his father fought,
And ledfinithe gallant fight.
He planted the banner high in air,
On the crest, as the Spaniards fled,
And there, in the flush of their victory.

His comrades found him-dead.

In a beautiful home on the Bayou Teche,
A veteran passed away,
And the wasted form that was laid to rest
Was clad in the Rebel gray.
His last fond words were a message of hope
For the boy that he loved so well;
And he never knew that his hero true
Was one of the brave who fell.

Back to the home of his childhood days,
(On the breast of the Southern sea),
They bore the form of the soldier boy
Who had died for Cuba free.
They buried the heroes side by side—
For each to his faith was true—
The father who fought for the Rebel gray,
And the son who died for the blue.

The Legend of the River Des Plaines

Out of the North, from the fair lake land, Comes the River of the Plain; And a mystical song of the long ago Is set to the tune of the rhythmic flow Of this River of the Plain.

And, oh! what a wonderful tale it tells—
This River of the Plain;
The lore of a people passed away,
The pride and wrong of a vanished day
By the River of the Plain.

For this was the land of the Miamis,
By the River of the Plain,
A people as brave as the Tartars bold,
Who crossed the straits, they say, of old,
To the River of the Plain.

'Twas here the council fires glowed,
By the River of the Plain;
And here the wigwam raised its crest
When the Indian hunter came to rest
By the River of the Plain.

Once, 'tis said, the great Manitou came
To the River of the Plain,
And calling the old men to his side
Said, "Make me a lodge, and I'll abide
By the River of the Plain."

And for a moon and more he stayed
By the River of the Plain,
And the wildest buffalo lost its fear,
And became as tame as the captive deer
By the River of the Plain.

The flowers bloomed as never before
By the River of the Plain;
And in the breath of the summer morn
Could be heard the song of the tasseled corn
By the River of the Plain.

But, strange to say, the people forgot,
By the River of the Plain,
That it was the Manitou made the feast,
And brought the wandering fowl and beast
To the River of the Plain.

Then grew the Miamis strong and proud,
By the River of the Plain;
"The earth," they said, "for us was made—
Our might will make all men afraid
By the River of the Plain!"

Then it was, in the quiet night,
By the River of the Plain;
The flame of the watchfire mounted high,
And brave and war-chief gathered nigh
To the River of the Plain.

And blood ran red in the scarlet land
Of the River of the Plain,
And nothing could stay the flame of death

That parched the earth like a dragon's breath By the River of the Plain.

Gorged with plunder and blood and scalp,
To the River of the Plain,
Came the Miamis, with shout and song,
Drunk with the spell of their sin and wrong,
By the River of the Plain,

Not a thought of the Manitou then,
By the River of the Plain,
But all unknown, in the quiet night,
The Miamis' God had taken flight
From the River of the Plain.

The tassels withered on the corn
By the River of the Plain!
And far away from the river shore
The bison wandered and came no more
To the River of the Plain.

Then Fever and Famine came and dwelt
By the River of the Plain,
And the people prayed in the sacred spot
Where the God had lodged, but he heard them
not

By the River of the Plain.

"Oh, Manitou, the mighty, good Manitou," they cried,

By the River of the Plain,

"Our hearts are filled with sadness—for us there is no mirth—

Save us or we perish—perish from the earth, By the River of the Plain!"

But the Maniton would not listen,
By the River of the Plain,
And he brought from the North a stronger race
To drive the Miami from his place
By the River of the Plain.

No monument marks the Miami graves
By the River of the Plain,
Tho' far away to the East, as they fled.
They left a trail of Indian dead
From the River of the Plain.

And now, if you stand by the musical stream
Of the River of the Plain,
And ask of the Miamis, brave and bold,
Who feasted and fought in the days of old,
By the River of the Plain—

This is the legend you will hear
From the River of the Plain—
The story of how the Manitou
Rebuked his children, long ago,
By the River of the Plain.

And the mighty tribe that was, is not,
By the River of the Plain,
And only the river knows the day
When the Miamis sinned and passed away
From the River of the Plain.

A Kansas Widow

Shufflin' 'long the street one day Met a friend from Kansas way: "Glad," sez I, "to see ye', Jane, An' hope yo'r feelin' well again!" Sez she, "Jes tol'able."

"Las' time I see ye' Jane," sez I,
"Th' pa'son 'lowed ye' hed t' die:
Must 'a knocked th' doctor out
T' see ye' well an' git about."
Sez she, "I reckon,"

"Hear yo'r married, too," sez I; ("Gosh! how time does flicker by!) 'Spose yo'r fond o' married life, An' proud t' be a farmer's wife?" Sez she, "I'm mournin'."

No one's corns is tre'd upon When a widder's to be won, So I sez, "Matilda Jane, Let's begin to spark again!" Sez she, "I'm willin'."

Jest a fortnight, to the day, Back we went to Kansas way; Sez I t' Jane, "Is Number Two As dear as t'other was to you?" Sez she, "Stop teazin"!" Cissy Clare

"If ever I marry a horrid man
I hope to die as soon as I can!"
This said Cissy Clare.
And the sun came down with brightest ray
And kissed her cheeks that summer day,
And golden made her hair.

Over the hills came Billee Gray,
From a country village far away,
To woo sweet Cissy Clare;
He looked upon her roguish face,
And fell a prey to her airy grace,
And loved he Cissy Clare.

He fetched her posies every day—
He drove her other beaux away—
But to speak he didn't dare;
But eyes said things that lips could not,
And go away he fain would not—
Away from Cissy Clare,

At last when flowers bloomed again
Beneath the Queen of Summer's reign,
And the days were sweet and fair,
He took her hand with a soft caress,
And said in tones of tenderness,
"I love thee, Cissy Clare!"

"Wilt go with me, my bonnie maid,
And see the parson now?" he said—
"'T is not so far away."
Then paled her face like highland snow,
And spake she bitterly and low,
"I cannot marry, Billee Gray.

"I've made a dreadful vow," said she,
"And nevermore shall I be free,"
Said pretty Cissy Clare.
"If ever I marry a man,' said I,
'As soon as I can I hope to die!'"
And weep did Cissy Clare.

"You need not marry me," said he,
"But I, forsooth, will marry thee,
My charming Cissy Clare."
Then smiling grew her face, and bright,
And, somehow, in the summer light
His arm went 'round the golden hair.

The Last of the Old-Time Clowns

In a darkened room of a quiet house An old-time jester lay, And a watcher waited in charity For his spirit to pass away.

His hair was white, his face was drawn,
And death was in his gaze,
But many times he woke and smiled,
And spoke of other days.

He talked of love, and he talked of fame,
And his quavering voice rang proud
As once again, in the circus ring,
He faced the cheering crowd!

The whole scene passed before his eyes—
The tents, the "tumblers" bold—
The stars who rode the "padded" steeds
In tights of spangled gold!—

The strong man and the "talking clown"—
The flying queen of air—
The master of the ring and whip—
The lady rider fair!

He cried "hoopla!" with his old-time vim,
And went in the "leaps" again,
And bowed when the crowd rose in the seats
To cheer the equestrienne!

And once again he hummed the songs
He sung in the long ago—
The merry rhymes of the old-time clown
That live in the mem'ry so.

And then, in a flash, the gay refrain
Changed to a passion wild;—
He turned his face to the whitewashed wall
And wept like a little child.

"No more," he cried, "can the past return—
'Tis time for me to die!

Gone for all is the one-ring show—
Last of the clowns am I!"

Then silence fell on the darkened room;
It seemed his soul had fled;
The watcher thought he lingered in
The chamber of the dead.

* * *

Down the street came a circus parade,
With dens and chariots grand,
And riding ahead, in a golden car,
A uniformed circus band!

Just as far as the eye could reach
Were the bannerets flying free,
And waving plumes, and prancing steeds,
And a mile of pageantry.

A thousand brilliant colors flashed Within the sunlight's glare, And twenty kinds of melody Made glad the morning air!

The old clown stirred—and then a smile
Across his features stole—
(Is this the music of the skies
That thrills his dreaming soul?)

And now, in chasseur raiment gay,
With bridles hanging free,
The mounted band comes trooping by
With swelling melody!

A sudden start—a cry of joy—
The clown is on his feet!
The curtain dark is torn aside!
His eyes are on the street!

"Am I awake? or do I dream?

Is this the morning sun?
Is this, a phantasy?" he cried,

"Or fifty shows in one?"

And still the glist'ning pageant passed, With knight, and herald gay, And still the circus bands played on As only they can play!

Long at the window sat the clown— His eyes aglow with hopeThe shricking "calliope."

At last he seemed to rouse himself
Like one who walks in sleep;
His palsied hands grew strong and still—
His voice was strangely deep:

"I may be dead to-morrow night—
To-day I'll see the show;
I want to see the sawdust ring
Once more before I go!

"And when I cross the river black
I'll look behind to see
The pennants on the 'big top' wave
Their last farewell to me!"

* * *

In the middle row of the monster tent—
The grass beneath his feet—
They placed the old-time circus clown—
A guest, in a coupon seat,

He clapped his hands at the tournament,
He smiled at the aerial queen;
Next to the one-ring circus, 'twas
The best he'd ever seen!

Then John O'Brien's horse display
Burst on his startled gaze—
"We'd naught like that," he softly said,
"In one-ring circus days,

"But where's your Merry Andrew?
And where's your talking clown?
And where's your 'rube' that fooled 'em when
The circus came to town?

"That was the time when singing clowns
Were kings on circus day!
But I'm the last, and with my life
The clown will pass away!"

Back flew the pad room curtain wide— Out sprang a motley crew— The merriest lot of painted wags That ever artist drew!

Clowns from the Humpty-Dumpty books— Clowns from the world grotesque! Clowns in white, and clowns in red, And clowns in arabesque!

The old man looked disdainfully—
He tossed his head in scorn—
"A lot of 'Reuben Glues'" he growled—
"The old-time clown was born!"

Scarcely a word the jesters spoke,
As down the track they went,
But ev'ry move they made, the crowd
Went wild with merriment!

They played the drollest kind of tricks
They sung in pantomime,—

The people on the farthest "blues" Could understand the "rhyme."

They "played" for the crowded "bleachers"—
They "played" for the "seats" that day,
They "played" for the centre section,
And they "played" for the old clown gray!

They "tumbled," and danced and chaffed,
Till the old-time clown forgot to frown,
And, in spite of himself, he laughed!

The more he tried to resist it,

The louder he laughed in glee:
"I thought that I was the last," he cried,
"And here's forty as good as me!

"Twice twenty clowns, in a hundred acts,
And a hundred kinds of fun;
And forty clowns in a single show
Are better than only one!"

* * *

Behind the scenes of the mammoth show, When the crowd had gone away, On a pallet of tinselled wardrobe bright The old time jester lay.

They'd carried him from the hippodrome—
"Dying," a doctor said,
And the gentle touch of the women's hands
Was balm to his throbbing head.

On the face of the old-time circus man
Was a look that was not of earth:
It touched the hearts of the bold athletes,
And the eyes of the men of mirth!

He babbled of home, and of children gone— He babbled of by-gone years— Till the strongest among them turned away To hide the welling tears.

"It's getting dark," he murmured— His life was ebbing fast— "It's good to fall asleep," he said, "In the dressing room at last!"

A gentle, whispered, last farewell—
"Good-bye, to one and all!"—
And the last of the old-time circus clowns
Had answered his final call!

L'ENVOI.

Peace to thee, gentle mummer—
Peace to thy soul, and rest!
Too long thy life!—'tis but in dreams
The one-ring show is best!



MISCELLANEOUS VERSE



A Summer Night at Baraboo

Gray-glistening in the evening sky
The quiet hills contented lie—
The hills of Baraboo.
A holy silence, brooding, deep,
Prepares the way for rest and sleep
Where gentle zephyrs softly sweep
The hills of Baraboo.

No cowbells tinkle in the dale;
At rest the herds within the vale—
The vale of Baraboo.
The noisy thrush—the gay red-breast,
Have stilled their music in the nest,
And drowsy night has wooed to rest
The vale of Baraboo.

Alone, the river, in its flight
Disturbs the stillness of the night—
The river of Baraboo.
A murmuring song the waters croon,
Holding their mirrors for the moon,
(Lost in the depths of the night too soon)
The river of Baraboo.

Oh, hills of gray and vale of green, Oh, waters with the mirror sheen--The pride of Baraboo-- So long as life and love shall be Let minstrel raise his song to thee— The hills—the vale—the river free— The pride of Baraboo.

Discontent

We talk of life and its narrow bounds—
We grieve for the things denied,
And forget that all things come to him
Who laughs and is satisfied.

Like children who think the moon is a toy, And the stars are baubles bright, We struggle and strive for the things afar And miss the good in sight.

When Knighthood Was in Flower

ROMANCE.

When knighthood was in flower
Great lord and baron held their sway,
And strolling minstrel sang his lay,
Extolling virtue in the fair,
And prompting knight to do and dare—
When knighthood was in flower!

HISTORY.

When knighthood was in flower
There was no legal test of right;
The baron ruled by force of might,
And every wrong and cruel thing
Was done "by order of the king!"
When knighthood was in flower.

ROMANCE.

When knighthood was in flower
The errant knight went forth in quest
Of beauteous maidens sore opprest,
And many a damosel forlorn
From brutal lord was bravely torn,
When knighthood was in flower!

HISTORY.

When knighthood was in flower
Each faction was a robber band,
To pillage and make waste the land,

And rugged children of the soil Were slaves of suffering and toil, When knighthood was in flower!

ROMANCE.

When knighthood was in flower
The gallant knight in tourney rode
To win the smile his love bestowed,
And, victor crowned, his trophies laid
Before a queen—or beggar maid!—
When knighthood was in flower!

HISTORY.

When knighthood was in flower
Scant chivalry was e'er displayed
For rustic wife or peasant maid,
And children of the bonded churl
Were passing sport for knight and earl,
When knighthood was in flower!

* * *

If knighthood ever was in flower,
'Tis well for human love and need
Its blossoms rank have gone to seed;
Far better that such chivalry
Should live alone in poetry
Of knighthood in its flower!

The Song of the Wheels

I sing no song of Orpheus—
Of melodies divine;
No lay of Grecian goddess—
No bacchanal to wine;
No epic to a hero—
No tribute to a name—
No "high-falutin" sonnet
To wreathe the brow of Fame;

But a little song of travel,
A rhyme of rail and train,
Arranged in simple measure,
With an everyday refrain;
A melody of motion—
To the sleeper a delight;
The song the wheels keep singing
On a sleeping car at night.

Have you never listened,
In the quiet of the night,
To the rattle and the prattle
Of the triple trucks in flight—
To the music of the journals,
The pounding of the rail,
Whirling through the darkness,
Down the iron trail?

Seeming now to whisper,
Now to sob in pain,
Then to roar with laughter
Like a thing of brawn and brain;
Soothing now to slumber,
Screeching now in fright—
Oh! there never was such music
As the wheels give out at night!

Many a song seraphic,
Many a strain divine,
Have touched the chords of feeling
In this breast of mine;
But still, the rarest music
That ever winged its flight,
Is the song the wheels keep singing
On a sleeping car at night.

The West to the East

Come out of the land of the dying East,
To the land of the living West;
Here in the heart of the Land of God
Where the harvest blooms in the virgin sod,
Is life, and hope, and rest!

O, ye who travel the crowded streets,
In the troublous cities of care,
Who struggle from morn until set of the sun,
What have you to show when the day is done?
What is your prize, and where?

The sunken eye, and the pallid cheek
Are the gifts of the crowded East,
Where men meet men in anger and strife,
And perishing millions battle for life,
And hunger is at the feast!

Why will you cling to the haunts of men,
To the town and its poisoned breath,
Where children are born in the world to weep,
And the only relief is the fitful sleep
That ends in the sleep of death?

The hand of the prairie is reaching out With a promise of life and rest:—

Abandon the struggle that is idle and vain, And come to the land of the golden grain— The heart of the living West!

For here is hope, and here is content,
And here is God's free air!
And here is the sun of the promised land,
Where the heart can grow and the soul expand,
And love is everywhere!

The Names of Long Ago

Things are not as they use to be,
(With a sigh, the old man said)—
The friends of my youth have passed away,
And the good old times have fled;
But most of all I miss the names
Of the folks I used to know—
The quaint old names I was wont to hear
In the happy long ago!

Where are the Calebs, and where are the Faiths,
And where the Samanthy Janes?
And where are the Eves of the singing schools
Who chanted the old refrains?
'Tis many a year since Jonah so sly
Made love to his Abigail dear,
And Thankful blushed to the roots of her hair
When she knew Beriah was near.

And there was Balaam and Ahab and Zeb,
And Dru', in her ponderous poke,
To say not a word of the backward Miles
Whose love Priscilla awoke;
Ham and Haman, and Cyrus and Lem,
And the simpering Zury Ann,
And Zeke, and Amos, and Jonadab,
And the goodly Jonathan!

Was ever an Azuba wooed in vain,
Or a name so sweet as, Hannah,
In the days when Uriah courted Zoe,
And Shadrach wooed Susannah,
And Jemima won, with eyes demure,
The love of her Obadiah,
But gave, like the merry jilt she was,
Her heart to Hezekiah?

Gone is Patty, and gone is June,
And Eneas is dying out,
And Mehetabel Jane is giving 'way
To the names that are now about;
But where would you find a sweeter name,
Or a fairer one to see,
Than the name of that long-forgotten flirt,
The blushing Felicity?

Farewell Janet, and farewell Truth,
And farewell Rachie Ann—
A long good-bye to the old time girl,
As well as the old-time man.
With all their puzzling modern ways
They've muddled my memory so,
I scarce remember a score of names
I knew in the long ago,

Pessimism

Half the things that in life go ill Can be traced to neglect and lack of will.

Half the trials that men befall When bravely met are n't trials at all.

Half the wrongs we think we bear Are woven in tissue as light as air.

Half the lies that fall on the ear Would do no harm if we failed to hear.

Half the faults of the folks next door Would virtues be could we pass them o'er.

Half the pleasure in life we miss By looking for trouble and not for bliss.

The Bells of San Gabriel

Sweet mission bells of San Gabriel—What tales of joy thy voices tell!
In smiling hours, thy accents free
Fill all the land with melody—
Glad bells of San Gabriel!

Sweet mission bells of San Gabriel—What tales of grief thy voices knell!
When heavy hearts are filled with pain
How sweetly soft thy low refrain—
Sad bells of San Gabriel!

Sweet mission bells of San Gabriel, All joy and sorrow in thee dwell; Thy wedding chimes turn, in a breath, To sobbing tones of woe and death— Sweet bells of San Gabriel!

Ambition

The restless waves,
Old Ocean's slaves,
Roll back apace,
And, black as shrouds
The Cimmerian clouds
Sweep on in space.

A youth, with eyes
Deep as the skies,
Rests on his oar,
And, bending low,
Long strives to know
The mystery of the shore.

"Oh, mystic land,
With storm-swept strand,
Ambition's gate,—
A restless youth,
In search of truth,
Would know his fate!"

Afar, in gleams,
The silver beams
Of Lunar light the way,
And night, outworn,
Gives breaking dawn
Fair promise of the day.

The restless waves—
Old Ocean's slaves—
Run high no more;—
With sightless eyes
The Boatman lies,
A wreck upon the shore,

Life

The play is on—the actors glide

Like phantoms through the tragic scene

Another act or two, and then—

Forever falls the final screen.

Sunrise

Out of the East, in the morning, Rises the God of the Day, Driving the ghosts of darkness From valley and hill away.

Filling the Earth with glory—
Kissing the flowers sweet—
In a golden car of splendor,
With heavenly coursers fleet.

Renascence

When the glowing leaves were dying,
And the autumn wind was sighing
Through the trees,
Then—my mind and being filling—
Came this thought, with sadness thrilling,
"As these summer leaves decay,
So will gladness fade away—
Just as these."

But I said—when springtime flowers
Filled the land with scented bowers,
And the trees,
'Neath sweet April's sunny showers
Formed their mystic, leafy towers—
"After sorrow's winter reign
Come the joys of life again—
Just as these,"

Rest

Peaceful is the river,
Gleaming is the strand,
And softly blow the zephyrs
From sea and meadowland;
The sun sinks in the bosom
Of the distant, golden West,
And the robins cease their chirping
As the world sinks into rest.

In Bohemia

"I'd rather live in Bohemia than any other land."

JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY

I'd rather live in Bohemia
Than in any other land,
Where every man is a brother,
With his heart in his open hand;
And whether a man be rich or poor,
So long as his heart is right,
He's just as good in Bohemia-land
As a king in his royal might.

Afar in a distant country
A dreamer wandered alone;
His heart was heavy with yearning
For the sound of a friendly tone;
He longed for the voice fraternal—
For the touch of a kindly hand—
And, lo! he awoke one morning,
And there was Bohemia-land.

In the beautiful valley beneath him,
As the vapors rolled away,
He saw the City of Friendship—
His vision of yesterday;
And the heart of the weary dreamer
Was filled with a joy divine:
"The world may do as it wills," he said,
"Since love and content are mine."

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So here's to the voice of friendship, And here's to the helping hand, And here's to the sun of Bohemia That kisses the dreamer's land! God's Country

Thought th' East was mighty fine,
First time I seen it;
Tramped about in New York town,
Chased th' lions up an' down Done old Broadway good an' brown—
Thought it was God's country.

Wandered out t' Illinois—
Crossed th' rollin' prairie;
Never seen sich wheat before,
An' corn enough t' last, an' more,
Till folks has reached th' golden shore—
This was sure God's country.

Came at last t' Angeles—
Heart o' California;
Saw th' figs an' orange trees,
Breathed th' scented ocean breeze—
Dead o' winter didn't freeze—
Only real God's country!

Victoria

Out of the darkened void of years there came a star,

And set itself upon a woman's brow;

And, far and near, men came, and gazed, and marveled much,

Naming the star-crowned woman-Queen!

And, while they gazed, more brilliant shone the star,

And over all the world its radiance shed,

Until in every land and clime was seen

The glory of its golden light,

One day, as wondrous as it came, it paled and died,

And she who had been Queen was Queen no more,

Except within the loving hearts of men. But, as it passed,

So passed the glory of the world, and over all the earth

Night fell, and filled the universe with gloom.







